

2012 Seattle Vehicle Residency Advisory Report



SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & SCIENCES
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT NOTICE

DATE AND TIME
NOTICE GIVEN: 11-08-10

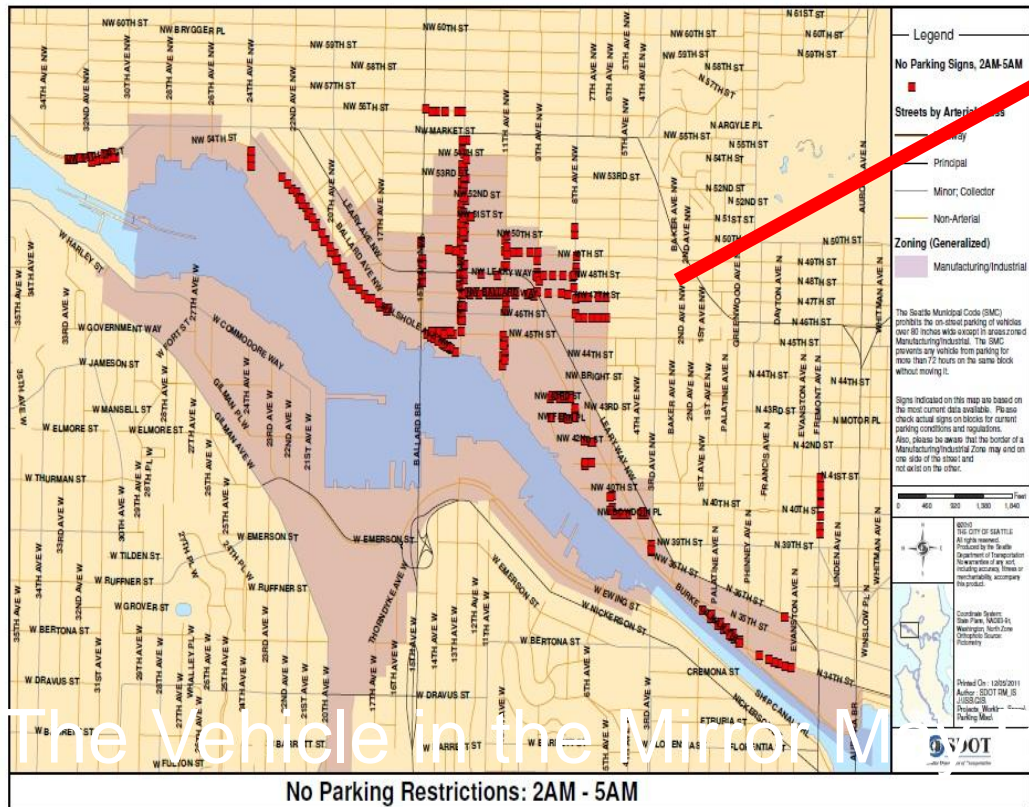
VEHICLE DESCRIPTION

LICENSE	STATE	MAKE	STYLE	COLOR
	WA		RV	

LOCATION OF VEHICLE

The Seattle Police vehicle as being hours is a violation must be driven from time NOTED BE CITATION, IMP EXPENSE. The complied with.

REMARKS



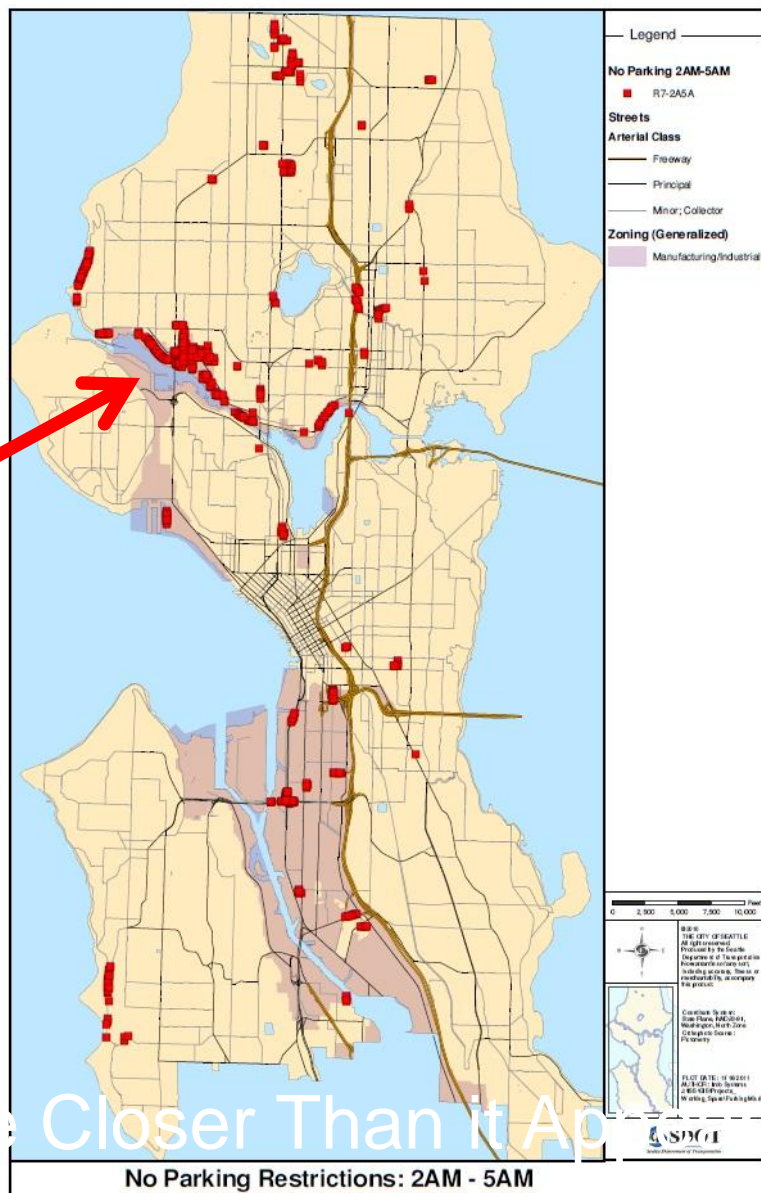
The Vehicle in the Mirror Map is Closer Than it Appears

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT NOTICE

DATE AND TIME
NOTICE GIVEN: 10-04-10

VEHICLE DESCRIPTION

LICENSE



The Vehicle in the Mirror Map is Closer Than it Appears

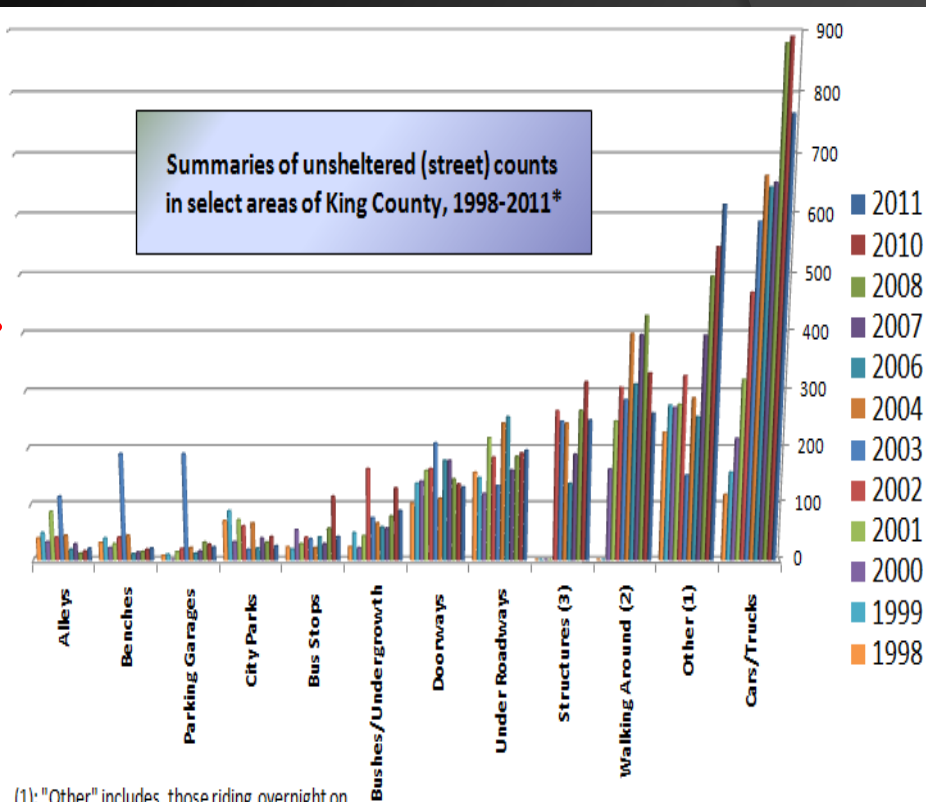
Vehicle Residency in King County

Summary of the 2012 Unsheltered Homeless Count in Selected Areas of King County

	SEATTLE	KENT	NORTH END	EAST SIDE	WHITE CTR	FEDERAL WAY	RENTON	NIGHT OWL BUSES	AUBURN	TOTAL
Men	571	71	12	62	2	8	15	137	4	882
Women	117	0	2	14	3	2	2	34	0	174
Gender Unknown	1207	32	17	62	50	67	56	0	40	1,531
Minor (under 18)	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	7
TOTAL	1,898	104	31	138	55	77	73	174	44	2,594
Benches	20	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	23
Parking Garages	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Cars/Trucks	519	36	18	52	29	48	55	0	34	791
Structures	289	13	0	6	21	16	3	0	0	348
Under Roadways	132	19	0	4	0	2	4	0	2	163
Doorways	143	2	3	0	1	0	3	0	2	154
City Parks	25	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	30
Bushes/Undergrowth	50	16	0	4	0	3	2	0	2	77
Bus Stops	22	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Alleys	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Walking Around	272	8	4	3	3	6	3	0	1	300
Other	408	9	2	67	1	2	1	174	1	665
TOTAL	1,898	104	31	138	55	77	73	174	44	2,594

3% increase when comparing similar count areas
 2012 2,514 (without new areas)
 2011 2,442

6% increase when comparing 2012 count total to 2011 count total
 2012 2,594 (includes new areas)
 2011 2,442



(1): "Other" includes those riding overnight on "Night Owl Buses" for 2006-2011, this adds 124-176 to this category for these years
 (2): Not counted prior to 2000
 (3): Not counted prior to 2002

* Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless; One Night Count Summaries and Reports, 2003-2010

Seattle University Project Goals

Our project was developed to:

1. Develop a method to collect accurate population size data about people living within their vehicles
2. Design a template which other communities may use to collect their similar information
3. Compile our findings to suggest actions which assist local communities, service providers and government provide vehicle residents with the resources needed to survive and succeed
4. Identify further research necessary to providing a full demographic census of vehicle residence

Vehicle Identification Schema

A vehicle parked on public street may be identified as a residence if it exhibits **at least two of six** characteristics:

1. The view through the front to rear windows is blocked.
2. At least one side window is blocked by sheeting, blankets, panels, and/or curtains.
3. There is evidence of unfrozen condensation on windows.
4. At least one window is partially open.
5. There are items often associated with vehicle residency such as generators, bicycles, or storage containers externally secured.
6. There are unusually large volumes of possessions, sometimes appearing as “garbage” (often in bags), within or near the vehicle.



1



2



3



4

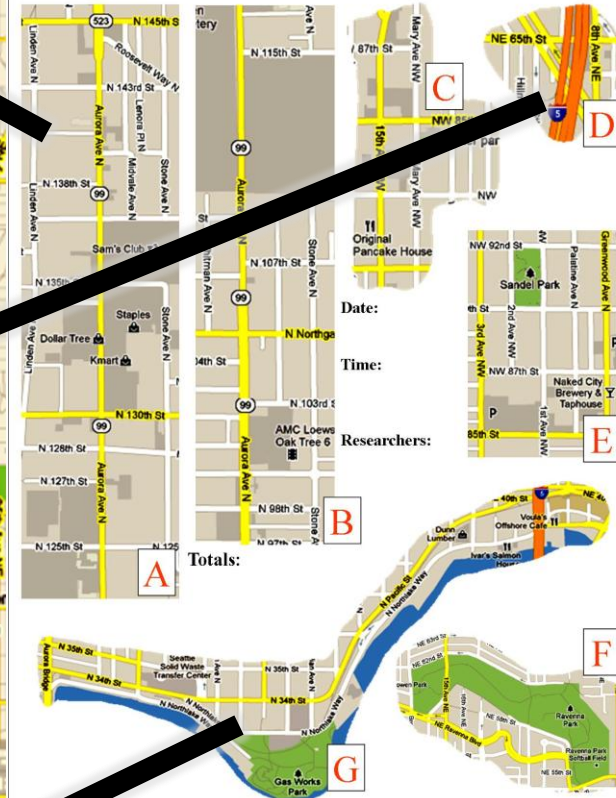


5



6

Study Areas



Study Area 1
Ballard

Study Area 2
Greater North Seattle

Results: Ballard

Totals:

04/12/12

02:00-05:00

63

04/20/12

Total VRs

02:00-05:00

73

63

04/23/12

16:30-19:15

71

043012

16:00-18:30

67

02:00-03:52

86

05/07/12

16:00-18:00

88

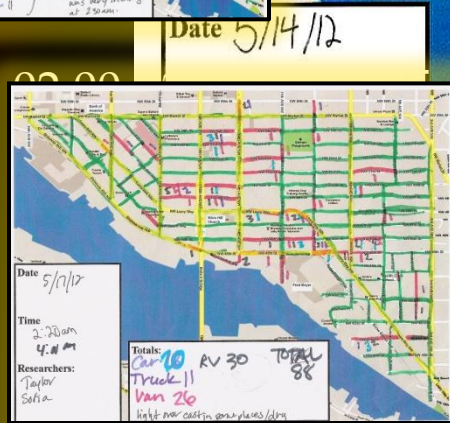
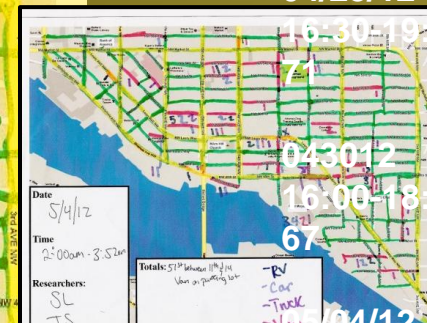
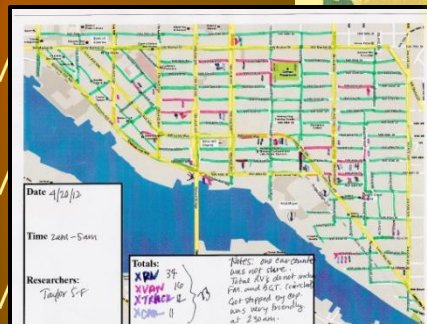
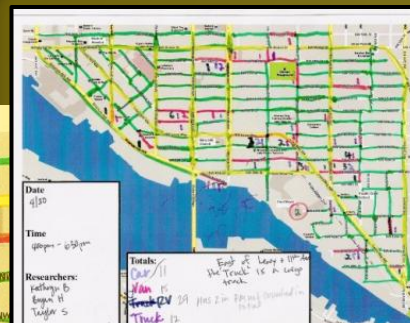
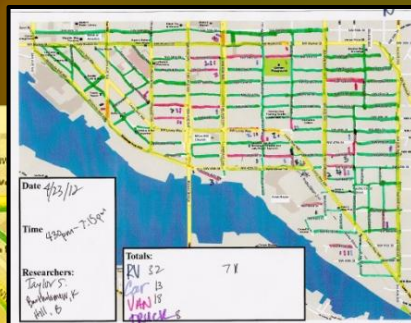
05/14/12

14:00–15:30

05/17/12

02:20-04:00

88



Results: North Seattle

VRs

04/2

02:00-

05/0

14:00-

05/05/12

02:00-

05/0

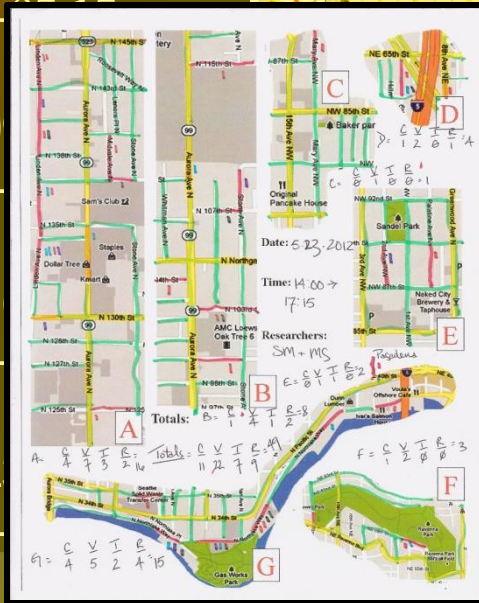
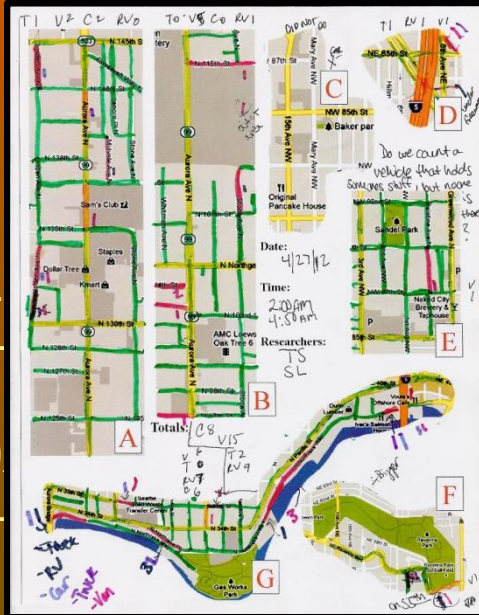
14:00-

05/1

14:00-

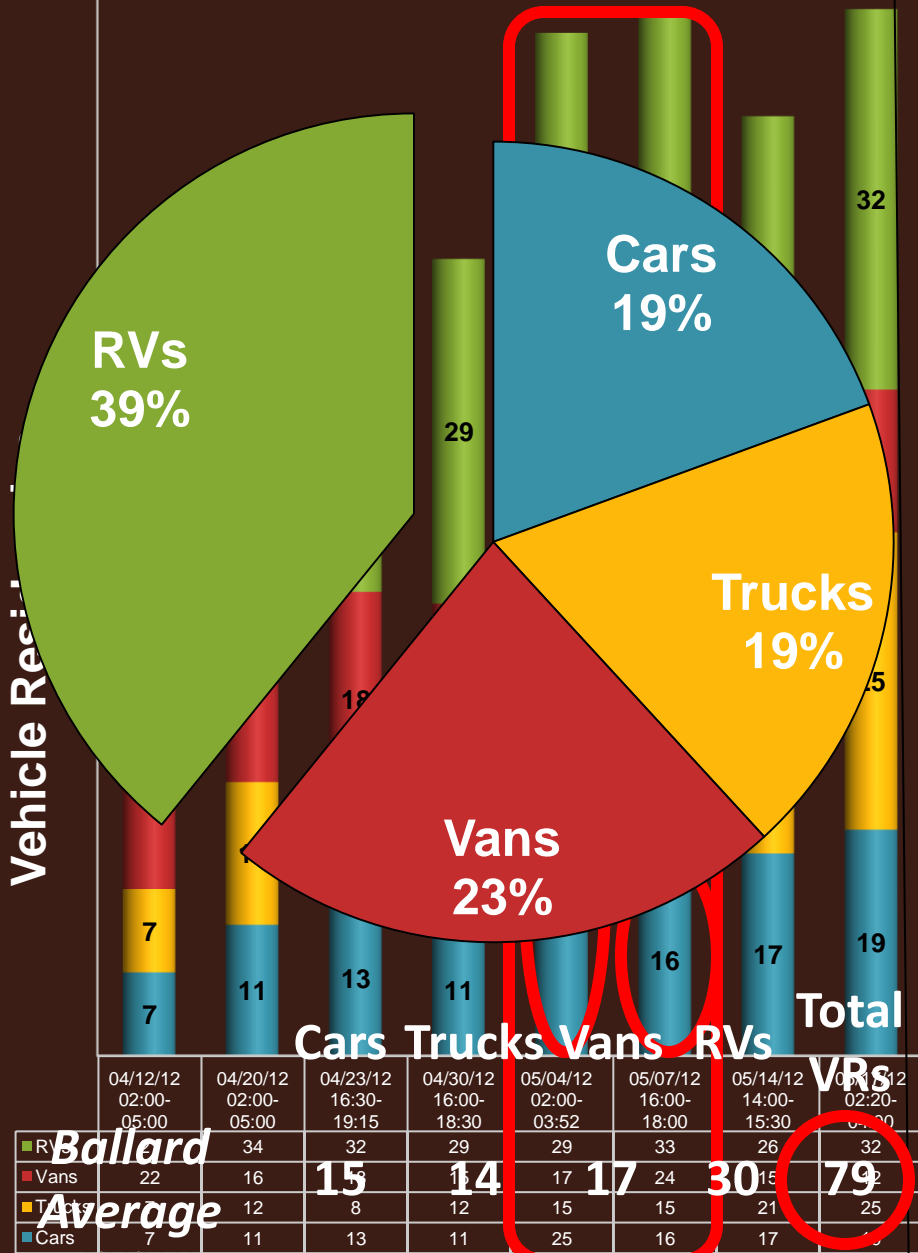
05/2

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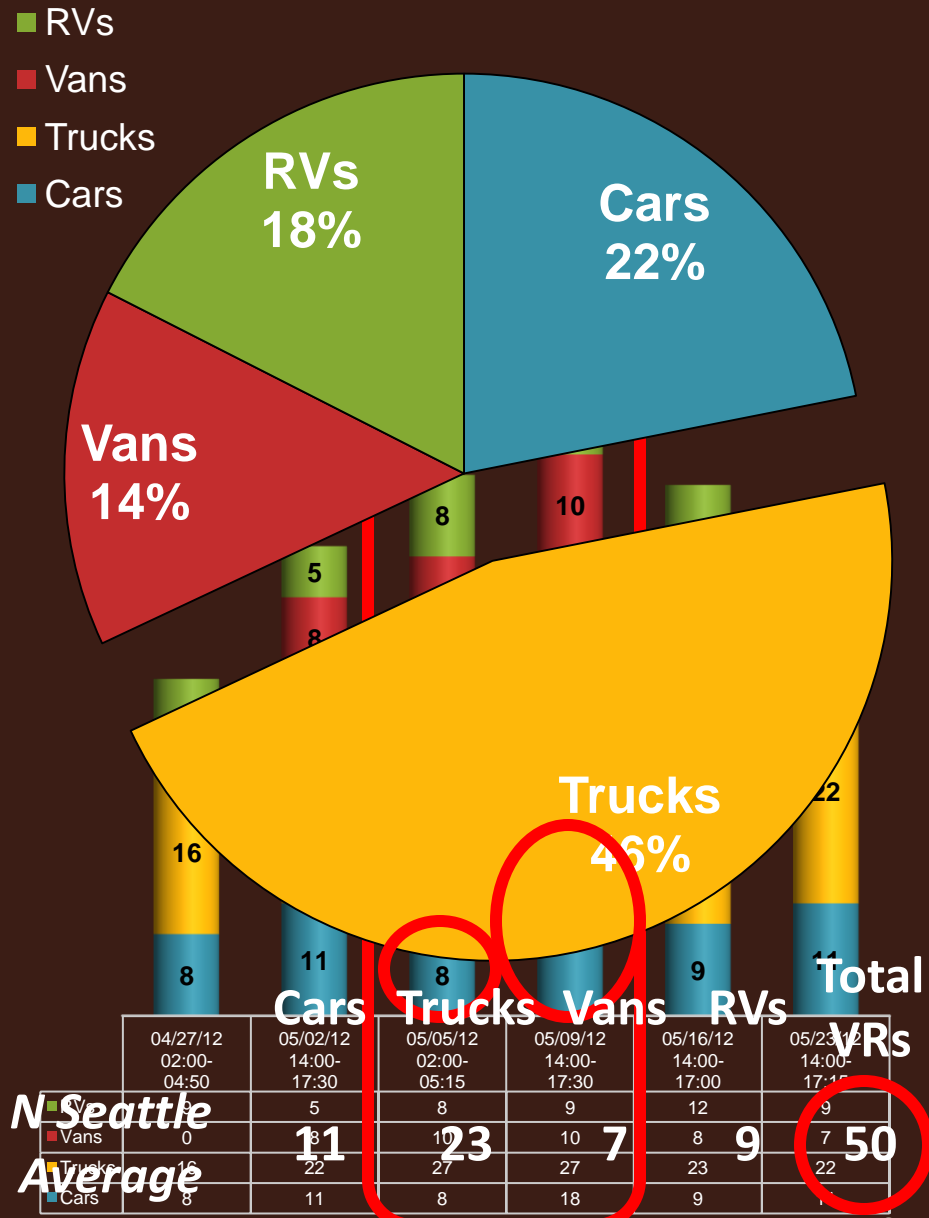


53

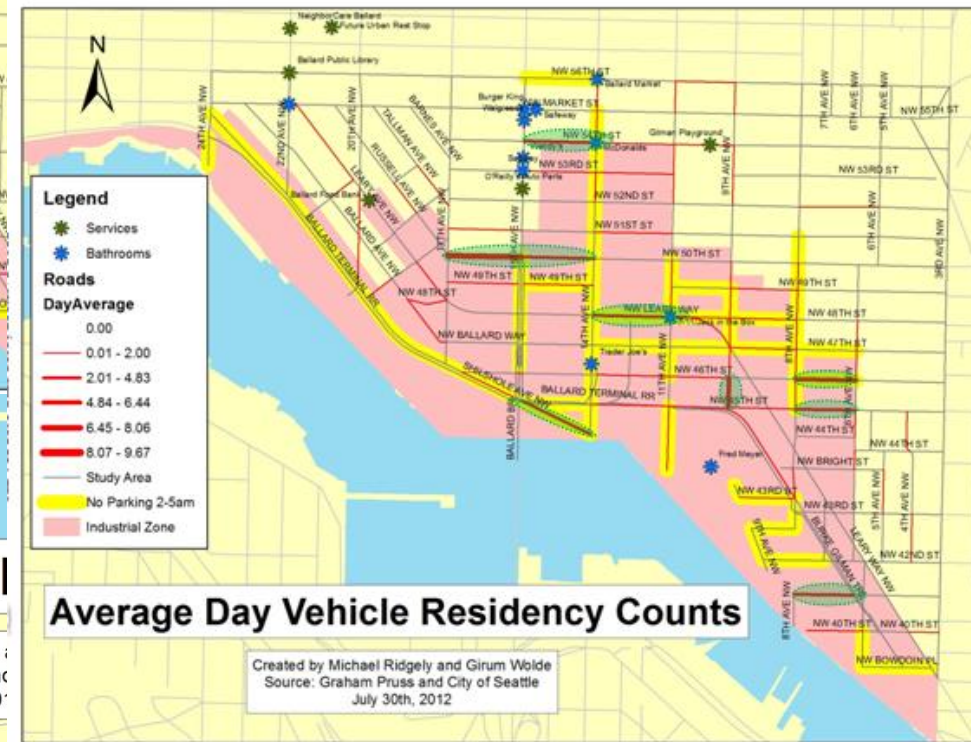
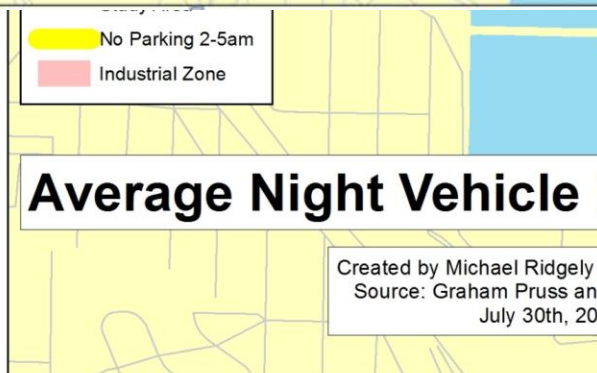
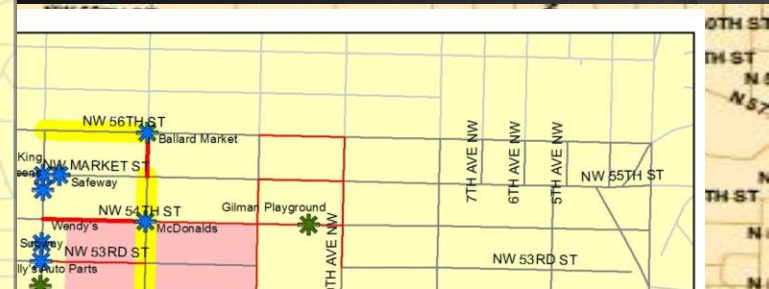
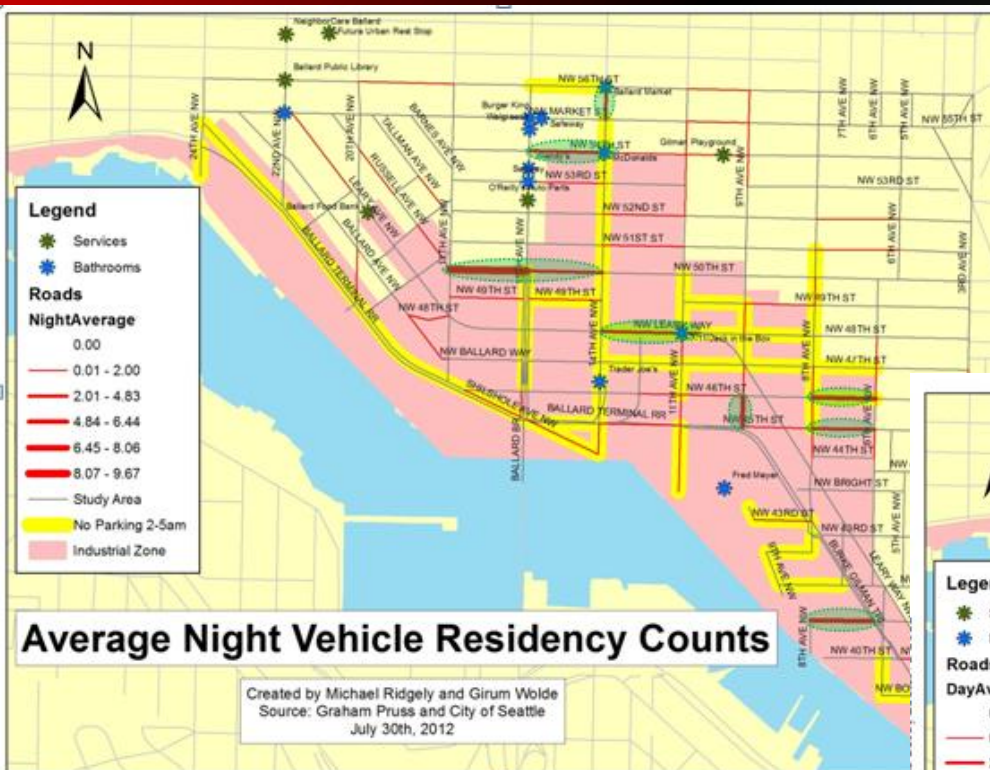
Ballard VR Totals VR Average 04/12/12 – 05/17/12



North Seattle VR Totals VR Average 04/27/12 – 05/23/12



GIS Mapped Data



Conclusions

1. Public perception of vehicle resident population size as well as space and resource use is different from reality.

- Hiding, or self-enforced invisibility, is used by many vehicle residents to protect their property, privacy, security and comfort. For many, the vehicle residence is a sole repository for a lifetime worth of paperwork, keepsakes and valuables, the loss of which can be devastating. The mass of these belongings, which are often seen within plastic bags, can lead to the potential misidentification of a residence as an abandoned or “junk vehicle”.
- The official winter 2011 count of vehicle residents within Ballard, reported by volunteers, was 43 people. Population data gathered during this time period as preliminary research for this project documents 96 visibly lived-in vehicles. Using the standard extrapolation formula of two people per vehicle, this represents 192 people - an over 300% increase above the reported official count for this area. This compares to a count of 70-90 vehicles (140-180 people) within Ballard, during our Spring 2012 research.
- Vehicle residents are seen by some as a source of crime, disease or filth; community complaints regarding this population within the Ballard industrial waterfront reflect this. However, there are no public restrooms, nor hygiene or waste disposal facilities within this area – the nearest public restroom is up to a mile from some vehicle residents. Private restroom use is restricted and generally unavailable from 10pm to 5am (there are two business restrooms in the area accessible between 10pm and 5am).
- The data collected appears to show migration between day and night of smaller vehicle residences, possibly indicating a reliance on larger vehicles which are parked longer-term for residence and smaller vehicles for employment. This is reaffirmed by interviews with vehicle residents, the majority of whom were employed or actively seeking employment.

Conclusions

- 2. Vehicle residency in North Seattle demonstrates reliance upon public parking within a highly constricted legal space.**
 - While access to public and social services such as police presence, public transportation, food banks and available employment are necessary for many vehicle residents, it is parking ordinance which primarily constrains their available living space.

Conclusions

3. Current ordinances place vehicles residents at personal risk and position them in direct conflict with the communities where they reside.

- One Seattle city law requiring “commercial-sized” vehicles over 80” wide to park overnight in manufacturing/industrial zones is particularly restrictive for people living in Recreational Vehicles (RVs), most of which are over 80” wide.
- Until recently, “No Parking 2-5am” signs were posted upon community complaint; these were disproportionately applied within areas often used for vehicle residence such as the Ballard industrial waterfront. These signs significantly decreased the availability of parking for vehicle residents; however, this signage simply moves vehicles to nearby streets and, in particular, limits available living space for RV residents. This contributes to the presence of dense RV groupings on streets which did not request the signs when they were available.
- A city-wide 72 hour parking restriction requires RVs to cycle overnight parking through these specific streets, creating a history of police response within a relatively small area. This complaint history (or “work-flow”) can culminate in the impounding of the vehicle.

Conclusions

- 4. Vehicle residents have specific needs which are unaddressed by general services designed for unsheltered people.**
 - Programs which are effective for unsheltered and “street-level homeless” populations do not respond to many needs of vehicle residents, particularly those which do not provide adequate (including oversized) parking, non-shelter-based and accessible hot food services, or gas vouchers. Some services may be detrimental, when the storage of a person’s vehicle is not accounted for and it must be parked at-risk on a city street while the owner is provided shelter.

Recommendations

1. The development of a city/county-wide “Safe Parking Program”

A comprehensive program can provide vehicle residents with the safe and reliable space they need to secure services, employment, and housing. Vehicle residency designated sites or areas can assist case management, law enforcement, and service/resource provision within appropriate space.

While a comprehensive program for Seattle hasn't been developed, we offer several suggestions for its design:

- Provide vehicle residents space to safely park and sleep within their vehicle.
- Enforce a general code of conduct to protect the safety of Safe Parking Program participants and the communities in which they reside.
- Provide a central location where service providers and case managers can maintain contact with their clients.
- Coordinate with pre-existing organizations to provide resource and site management.
- Safe Parking Programs should provide access to:
 - Individual case management and/or resources to attain housing, employment, medical and mental health care
 - Restrooms, hygiene facilities, waste disposal, electrical outlets and fresh water.
 - Dry kitchen, eating, meeting and parking areas
 - Public transportation and/or gas vouchers, in addition to convenient access to transportation hubs
 - Assistance with licensing and maintenance of vehicles

Recommendations

2. Policy review of ordinance and enforcement relating to vehicle residency.

Our research identifies four ordinances which help create dense areas of vehicle residency on limited streets, leading to public complaints and placing the well-being of vehicle residents at risk. These include :

1. “Oversized” overnight parking restriction to industrial/manufacturing zones (SMC 11.72.070)
2. City-wide 72-hour parking restriction (SMC 11.72.440)
3. “No Parking 2-5am” signs within areas of high vehicle residency,
4. The “Scofflaw Law”, enabling the mechanical immobilization of vehicles with multiple unpaid tickets (SMC 11.35)

- Parking enforcement officers are frequently placed in the middle of this situation, compelled to issue citations which are known to cause devastating effects on vehicle residents when unsheltered homeless outreach should be provided instead . Jean Darsie, a *Scofflaw Mitigation Fund* director, reports that many of the requests which they receive for outreach and assistance from vehicle residents is based upon information currently provided by Seattle Police Department Parking Enforcement Officers and the Seattle Municipal Courts.

Recommendations

3. Public restrooms, hygiene facilities and waste disposal units are necessary in areas of high vehicle residency.

- Public urination, defecation and waste disposal are frequently cited as a source of complaints to local Police and Parking enforcement by community members
- Areas of high vehicle residency, often on the margins of our communities or within industrialized zones, generally lack immediate access to public hygiene, waste disposal and restroom facilities. Distance from these amenities, especially at night, contributes to public and private unsanitary behavior.

Recommendations

4. The City of Seattle should provide support and/or funding for programs which specifically address vehicle residency.

- The ***Safe Parking Pilot Project*** currently provides case management, safe parking and restrooms for up to seven parking places in church owned lots (although, only one lot currently allows families or RVs).
- The ***Safe Parking Outreach Coordinator*** documents the effectiveness of current programs, work to increase awareness as well as secure future funding and sites.
- The ***Scofflaw Mitigation Fund***, an all volunteer organization, is currently on the front lines of protecting people from the loss of their vehicle-home. This fund was created through private donations in mid-2011 to help people who have had, or are at risk of having, their vehicle impounded . The volunteers in this group work with Parking Enforcement, Human Services, the Seattle Municipal Courts as well as local impound lots and vehicle service centers to release (and often repair) vehicle-homes. The *Scofflaw Mitigation Fund* is, essentially, a stop-gap to help people who may have already lost their vehicle-home; this is useful to help mitigate harm, however programs or policy which halt the creation of this harm is necessary.
- The ***Office of the Mayor's Vehicle Resident Action Coalition*** is currently collecting information from departments throughout Seattle City government on the total costs of personnel, enforcement, as well as fees for towing and impound to compare with revenue received from "scofflaw" enforcement on vehicle residences.

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